Theft and fire cases in defence arsenals

†882. SHRI LALIT KISHORE CHATURVEDI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that incidents of fire in defence arsenals take place frequently and whether all such incidents are reported to higher officers;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that arms are stolen from the arsenals and sold outside, and these arms even fall in the hands of terrorists, dacoits and anti-social elements;

(d) whether fire is lit to hide the deficiency caused due to these thefts; and

(e) the mechanism to be developed to stop such types of incidents in arsenals?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) and (b) In the past five years, there has been no incident of fire in Naval Armament depots and only one incident of fire in the Air Force at Air Force Station Amla. Since 2002, there have been four incidents of fire in Army Ammunition depots at following places:

(i)	Dappar	—	27th July, 2002.
(ii)	Jodhpur	—	2nd August, 2002.
(iii)	Pulgaon	—	22nd March, 2005.
(iv)	Khundroo	—	11th August, 2007.

(c) and (d) There are elaborate security arrangement in place at depots where arsenals are stored to safeguard against thefts and pilferages. Whenever any such loss etc. comes to notice, the same is investigated and appropriate action taken.

(e) All cases of fire incidents have been investigated by Courts of Inquiry. The remedial measures suggested by the Court of Inquiry have been adopted. Adequate security and safety measures are already in place in defence Depots. Improvement of safety measures is an ongoing process.

Low expenditure on Defence

883. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Pakistan has outstripped India in purchasing military hardware and software, notching up arms deals worth $5.1 billion in 2006, as compared to $3.5 billion by India;

(b) whether it is a fact that India still continues to spend just about 2.5 percent of its GDP on defence, despite the armed forces demand to raise it to at least 3 percent, as the figures for Pakistan and China hover around 4.5 percent of their GDPs; and

(c) if so, the response of Government and the action proposed thereon?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (c) No reliable and verifiable data on defence expenditure of other countries is available.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

During the last three financial years, India's average defence budget has been about 2.26% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Expenditure on defence is undertaken with a view to keeping the Armed Forces in a state of preparedness to meet any challenges. Necessary funds are made available for defence expenditure taking into account the threat perception and technological changes.

Upgradation of skills of short service officers

884. SHRIMATI SYEDA ANWARA TAIMUR:
SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) what steps have been taken so far to upgrade the skills of Short Service Officers to prepare them for alternative employment;

(b) how many Short Service Officers have been released from the Army after completing their terms of contract employment, and have been absorbed in gainful employment during the last five years; and

(c) has any study been made to find out difference, if any, in the combat skills of Short Service Officers *vis-a-vis* regular commissioned officers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI M.M. PALLAM RAJU): (a) Upgradation of skills of Officers of the Armed Forces (including Short Service Officers) is a continuous process. A number of job oriented courses relating to IT, Management etc. at premier institutions like IIM are sponsored by Directorate General of Resettlement (DGR) for defence officers.

(b) Short Service Officers who have been released from the Army after their contractual period during the last five years is as follows:

Year	Release after 5 years	Release after extended tenure	Total
2002	34	11	45
2003	32	28	60
2004	40	49	89
2005	65	54	119
2006	82	82	164
Total:	253	224	477

No details concerning post-release employment of officers released after completion of initial contractual period of five years are maintained since only defence service officers of the rank of Colonel or equivalent and above who retire with pension, gratuity or any other benefits are required to obtain prior permission for accepting any commercial employment.

Officers, who have been released during extended tenure after their initial contractual period of five years, were released on assurance provided by the officers that they have suitable civil employment. Hence, the 224 officers who were released in the last five years while in their extended tenure may be deemed as gainfully employed.